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RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0373  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0433  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0774  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 1975  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0453  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0496  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0879

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SUBJECT: JUNTA GIVES FIRST REACTION TO AU-IMPOSED SANCTIONS ON MAURITANIA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 332

¶1. (U) Colonel Ahmedou Bamba Ould Baye, Secretary General of the High State Council posted a statement on the HSC web site in the junta's first official reaction to the sanctions imposed by the African Union on February 5 (Reftel). In his statement, Baye offered mild criticism of the AU, arguing that it was unaware of the "positive measures and developments" ushered in with the "Rectification Movement." Baye also trumpeted the supposed accomplishments of the HSC, and said Mauritania's hand remains extended to the international community and domestic political actors to "begin a frank and responsible dialogue."

¶2. (SBU) Comment: The High State Council chose to issue its first reaction to sanctions via a low-key message by its Secretary General on a Web site, rather than through the official state-run newspapers, radio, or TV. Junta head, General Abdel Aziz, has made no comment. Undoubtedly the HSC wants to minimize the potential domestic fallout from the imposition of sanctions. Nevertheless, other media outlets were more forthcoming. The headline "Targeted AU sanctions against the High State Council: As if nothing had happened?" was one representative reaction highlighting the HSC's seeming oblivion to international condemnation. End comment.

¶3. (U) The following text is an English translation of the original French statement by Colonel Baye:

BEGIN TEXT

ROADMAP OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY: AN IRREVERSIBLE ROUTE

I am taking this opportunity to thank all the Mauritanian citizens who participate in the activities of the web site [www.hce.mr](http://www.hce.mr) by consulting it regularly or by enriching it with their diverse contributions.

I inform them equally of my decision to join them, through this column, in order to establish a direct exchange on the methods and means best suited for preparing the transition period.

In this regard, I want to reassure our citizens of the determination of the High State Council and its leader General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Head of State, to lead to completion all the measures underway with a view towards the rapid return of constitutional order, in accordance with the will expressed by the overwhelming majority of Mauritians.

This strategic choice is dictated by the supreme interest of the nation and by the recommendations formulated by the participants in the National Dialogue on Democracy, far removed from any political one-upmanship or exterior meddling.

This reality seems to have been overshadowed by the latest decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council, which not only ignored the positive measures and developments registered out in the field since the advent of the Rectification Movement, but also the open-mindedness of our partners that has been expressed by all the steps they have undertaken to find a way out of the current situation and return to constitutional order.

Whatever one may say, the reforms we have committed to and the general feeling of all our citizens shows that the initial crisis experienced during the reign of the former President of the Republic is well and truly past.

In this respect the road map issued by the National Dialogue on Democracy could not be clearer... Clear also are the measures of cleaning up public management, making urban spaces viable, improving living conditions, paying for emergency medical care, securing the borders and fighting terrorism and organized crime, etc...

As much as it was desirable that all these issues should serve to offset the unbridled fervor towards sanctions, they still serve for us as objective levers for legitimizing the process mapped out by the Rectification Movement.

That said, our hand remains extended to all partners of Mauritania

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so they can look deeper at the evolution underway, with strict respect for the choices of our people.

Our hand is equally extended to all national political actors, whoever they are, to begin a frank and responsible dialogue, in order to seize the present opportunity to return to constitutional order in a climate of participation, far removed from any taking of sides or particular ambitions.

The ongoing preparations, such as the administrative census and amendments of [electoral] lists must be the object of a vast mobilization.

This mobilization must reflect the national will, especially since for the first time Mauritaniens abroad will be able to cast their vote.

Such a measure is a guarantee of transparency that shows that our citizens are mature enough to chart their own route, with all sovereignty.

Secretary General  
Colonel Ahmedou Bamba Ould Baye

END TEXT

HANKINS